

# Sadism in the Plays of Vijay Tendulkar

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**Abstract :** The word sadism comes from the name of a historical figure, Marquis de Sade, ( 1740- 1814) a French Count, writer and philosopher. Sadism is a type of behaviour in which a person obtains pleasure from hurting other people and making them suffer physically, emotionally or mentally. The key components in sadism are the intention to harm, pleasure in causing another's distress, a lack of remorse and failure to take the responsibility. The present paper is an attempt to study sadism as perceived in the male protagonists of Vijay Tendulkar's three plays - *Silence ! The Court is in Session*, *Kanyadaan* and *Sakharam Binder*. Vijay Tendulkar's male protagonists have the animalistic qualities like violence, brutality, ferocity and cruelty ingrained in them which result in their inflicting pain, torture, and violence on the second sex.

In the play, *Sakharam Binder*, Sakharam, a Brahmin by caste, lives like an animal rejecting all the outdated social codes, rituals and marriage systems and follows his own ideology. This self-proclaimed womaniser, Sakharam searches the helpless and forsaken women, whom he brings home, gives them food, shelter and clothes and then brutally tortures them to satisfy his sexual desire and domestic needs. In *Kanyadan* Arun has the traits of a sadist. He takes pleasure in torturing Jyoti verbally, emotionally, psychologically as well as physically. The emotional, verbal and psychological violence against women in Vijay Tendulkar's play '*Silence! The Court is in Session*' may also be seen as a result of sadism of male characters of the play.

**Keywords:** Distress, brutality, violence, cruelty, pleasure,

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The word sadism comes from the name of a historical figure, Marquis de Sade, ( 1740- 1814) a French Count, writer and philosopher. The term was first used by the psychiatrist Richard von Krafft- Ebing ( 1840-1902).

Sadism is a type of behaviour in which a person obtains pleasure from hurting other people and making them suffer physically, emotionally or mentally. A sadist humiliates people intentionally in presence of others, treats them in an unkind and harsh way, would lie without any apparent motive behind it, frightens and puts restrictions on others, admires dictators, has fantasies which involve hurting people, would disclose the secrets of others, portrays others falsely to damage their reputation, ruins another person's relations. If the target of the sadist is weak and unlikely to retaliate, the intensity of the attack is increased. No provocation is needed for his sadistic activities. He would never take the responsibility or feel remorse for harming others. The key components in sadism are the intention to harm, pleasure in causing another's distress, a lack of remorse and failure to take the responsibility.

The present paper is an attempt to study sadism as perceived in the male protagonists of Vijay Tendulkar's three plays - *Silence ! The Court is in Session*, *Kanyadaan* and *Sakharam Binder*.

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In the play, *Sakharam Binder*, Sakharam, a Brahmin by caste, lives like an animal rejecting all the outdated social codes, rituals and marriage systems and follows his own ideology. This self-proclaimed womaniser, Sakharam searches the helpless and forsaken women, whom he brings home, gives them food, shelter and clothes and then brutally tortures them to satisfy his sexual desire and domestic needs. In his contractual cohabitation or live-in-relationship with woman, if a woman fails to keep him happy for long or there is no spark left in her, he discards her and brings another woman who can live with him as his married wife. The play begins when he has left the sixth woman and brings the seventh woman, Laxmi, a typical Indian

woman to his home. He tells her the rules of living at his home and expects her to behave as an obedient wife. He says, "...I'm the master here . . . a house must be a home, you understand?" (SB 125). Laxmi is not allowed to speak in raised voice, to ask any question, or to talk with any stranger. She has to live within the four walls drawing veil over her face.

She accepts the vicissitude of life without any protest. She clutches Sakharam as her only option to survive and worships him as her husband. She tries to satisfy his each and every need still he fails to understand her expectations and exploits her physically as well as psychologically. He orders her to press his legs.

The terrible form of sadism raises the heartbeats of the readers in act I, scene VI, when on Ganesh Chaturthi, Laxmi does not permit Sakharam's close friend, Dawood Miyan to join the prayer of Ganpati because he belongs to Muslim. On this incident, Sakharam fails to control his rage. He suddenly flings the *aarti* things down and in rage slaps her hard. He callously beats her like an animal with the belt till her body convulsed in pain. Laxmi in spite of opposing his physical violence bears it saying not to beat in front of God. The following conversation is the exposure of brutality, violence and callousness in the animal lurking behind Sakharam:

**Laxmi:** I'm only speaking the truth. A Muslim singing an *aarti* to *Ganpati* and in my home— [Sakharam lashes at her with belt.]... If you want to beat me, beat me inside. Not in front of God! He's only come to the house today...

**Sakharam:**[considers Laxmi's upright and quivering stance a challenge]. All right. Come in. I'll fix you. (144)

Laxmi's upright and quivering stance irritates his wrath all the more and he follows her inside with the belt. The sounds of blow upon blow along with her agonised moans come from within the dark kitchen. Though her whole body is throbbing with pain, he doesn't forget to gratify his physical lust. His sexual thrust makes him insensitive to the animalism inflicted by him on the body and mind of the women in his life. He controls Laxmi's emotions, even her sense of playfulness, when he catches her in conversation with an ant. Physically Laxmi appears to him a frigid woman, but at night he tries to excite her by asking her to laugh. Her laughter becomes a metaphor to guard his ego making him impatient to give an outlet for his suppressed passion. His unconscious pain echoes in his allegation, "you laugh for the ant. But you won't laugh when I ask you to." (141) Out of contempt, he does not let her sleep. His conversation with drowsy Laxmi during midnight reveals his excessive excitement enforcing physical and mental violence that compels her to do what he says:

**"Sakharam:** Now laugh. Are you going to laugh or not?

**Laxmi:** [moaning]. No... My whole body is throbbing with pain. Such gnawing pain. [Moans] You'd think my flesh was on fire.

**Sakharam:** So what?... Are you going to laugh or shall I throw you out? Shall I? Come on, get up.

**Laxmi:** Let me go. Oh, God... I'll die!

**Sakharam:** Laugh, and then die!

[Laxmi continues to moan.]

**Sakharam:** Laugh! Laugh this minute. Or I'll twist your arm. I will. I'll get the belt. Laugh." (145)

Hence, in this way Sakharam gratifies his whimsical desires by beating and scolding his sheltered woman.

Laxmi who has to do all the household works from day and night just like a slave, finally, gets exasperated and can take it no more. Being fed up with Sakharam's hellish treatment and brutal behaviour, Laxmi says,

"I've never heard a kind word here. Always barking orders. Curses. Oaths. Threatening to throw me out. kicks and blows. [Wipes her eyes with the end of the sari.] There I was in agony after I'd been belted, and all you wanted me to do was laugh. Laugh and laugh again. Here I am on the point of death and I'm supposed to laugh. Hell must be a better place than this. [Whimpers] If I die, I'll be free of this once and for all." (148)

Laxmi's bitter words hurt Sakharam, who becomes more violent and aggressive towards her.

When the generous, tender and calm-hearted Laxmi fails to fulfil the excessive physical lust of aggressive, violent and sensual Sakharam, he throws her out of his home and brings a new 'bird', a young and attractive Champa who too is a victim of animalism hidden in her drunkard husband, Fauzdar Shinde like those before her. Champa got from her husband—unbearable tortures, humiliations, cruelties, sadisms and the

pains of marital rape. She leaves her husband to save her honour because he in his addiction of alcohol wanted to make her whore. Unveiling the physical, psychological and sexual torture of her husband, she says:

“...I don’t have a heart. He chewed it up raw long ago ... He brought me from my mother even before I’d become a woman. He married me when I didn’t even know what marriage meant. He’d torture me at night. He branded me, and stuck needles into me and made me do awful, filthy things. I ran away. He brought me back and stuffed chilly powder into that god-awful place, where it hurts most. That bloody pimp! What’s left of my heart now? He tore lumps out of it, he did. He drank my blood...” ( 167)

Being passionate towards Champa’s oozing beauty and sexuality, Sakharam cannot control his extreme desire for bodily lust and so, on seeing the sleeping Champa, he becomes restless. He is so much infatuated with her boy that he cannot free himself from the lure of its charm. He repeatedly tries to go around her like a hungry dog behind a bitch. In Act II, Scene III, he again tries to take her into his clutches in her sleeping at night. She reacts immediately and sits up. Rejecting to share her bed with him, she says, “Take care not to rub me the wrong way. I don’t like it—all that man-woman stuff.” (168) Just like Laxmi he also forces Champa to gratify his sexual itches with physical and psychological violence. But, when she rejects to do so, he becomes violent and threatens her reminding his condition to stay at his house as a wife. However, ultimately, in all her helplessness as there is left no alternative to her but to share bed with him and for the fulfilment of her bare needs such as food, clothing, and shelter—she has to yield to his sexual hunger but, for that she reluctantly has to drown herself in alcohol first to hide disgust. She gives outlet to her inner suffering:

“...he (Sakharam) really takes his money’s worth out of a woman. I’ve managed to last out here. What else can I do? Go out in the streets? Face half a dozen animals every day! Easier to put up with this one.” (181)

In act three of the play, animalism in man reaches to its zenith when the bad luck of Laxmi brings her back to Sakharam’s home. She has driven away from her nephew’s house in the accused of stealing. But as soon as Sakharam saw her, he becomes red in anger. He refuses to give her shelter in spite of her pleading plight. She has already considered him as her God (husband) and started wearing *mangalsutra* of his name. But he mercilessly kicks her away. Clenching his teeth, he begins to rain blows on Laxmi. She doubles up in pain, but she does not leave his feet. The sadistic behaviour of Sakharam continues till the quit moment of the play. When Sakharam comes to know the physical relations of his new wife, Champa with his friend, Dawood, his masculinity doubly hurts. Her unfaithfulness turns Sakharam mad with anger and in its consequence, he murders her.

Thus, the play realistically presents a morbid picture of the fact that how most of the women are rendered voiceless and become victims of the sadistic behaviour of their male companion in the society.

In *Kanyadan* Arun has the traits of a sadist. He takes pleasure in torturing Jyoti verbally, emotionally, psychologically as well as physically. In act I scene II Jyoti brings Arun to introduce him to her parents. During the conversation he unnecessarily uses humiliating words. He asks Jyoti:

Will you marry me and eat stinking bread with spoilt dal in my father’s hut? Without vomiting? Tell me, Jyoti, can you shit everyday in our slum’s village toilet like my mother? Can you beg, quaking at every door, for a little grass for our buffaloes? (513)

Jyoti begins to weep. On seeing her crying Arun asks her forgiveness for being rude:

Sorry! Mood’s out! Happens often, but new to you. At times a fire blazes- I want to set fire to the whole world, strangle throats, rape and kill. Drink up the blood of the beasts, your high caste society. (514)

When Jyoti tells him that she is not a touch-me-not girl, ‘Arun grabs her arm and twists it. Jyoti moans in pain.’ Her shock is greater than her pain. When Seva asks him about his career he says, “No problem. We shall be brewing illicit liquor.” Arun goes on talking in an obscene language.

Seva tells her husband Nath about the internal wound Jyoti has because of Arun’s beastly behaviour.

Nath: Here in these pages he describes the humiliation he has undergone with extraordinary sensitivity...and the same man kicks his pregnant wife on her belly? How dare he do it to her? How dare he? (*Kanyadan* 543)

Seva: Why not? Doesn’t his wife belong to the high caste? In this was he is returning all the kicks aimed at generations of his ancestors by men of high caste, ... He says I... am ...a procuress who supplies girls from the

Seva dal to the Socialist leaders...says he... and you are not Jyoti's father. Like guruji... an eunuch... her real father... (544-546)

Arun's behaviour on his first visit to her home was uncultured and uncivilized. After the marriage when Seva asks him the reason of his violent behaviour. He says:

What am I but the son of scavengers. We don't know the non-violent ways of Brahmins like you. We drink and beat our wives... I am a barbarian, a barbarian by birth. When have I claimed ay white collar culture?..I am what I am... and shall remain exactly that. And your Jyoti knew what I was even before she married me. In spite of that she married me, she did it out of her own free will.

Seva: She thought you would improve after marriage.

Arun: If she thought so your Jyoti is a stupid fool. (540)

The emotional, verbal and psychological violence against women in Vijay Tendulkar's play '*Silence! The Court is in Session*' may also be seen as a result of sadism of male characters of the play.

The members of the amateur theatre group have some inkling of Benare's intimate relations with Prof Damle and her resultant pregnancy so they concoct a case similar to the life of Benare. They ask Benare to play the part of the accused. They call it a game but as the rehearsal moves on, all the characters gang up to torture her. Each member of the group gets a sadistic kind of pleasure in exposing her private life. Miss Banare finds herself caught in a trap. At the end of the act one, Benare is suddenly accused of a grave crime. Kashikar, the judge of the Mock Law Court asks her,

Prisoner Miss Benare, under Section No.302 of the Indian Penal Code you are accused of the crime of infanticide. Are you guilty of the aforementioned crime? (74)

On hearing this 'Benare looks stunned. All are silent for the moment .The atmosphere is extraordinarily somber.'(74)

The act two opens with Kashikar repeating the same question. Benare stands numbly with a chair for support. Sukhatme asks her, 'Why are you so grave all of a sudden? After all, it's a game. Just a game, that's all. Why are you so serious?' (75) Though really serious and afraid, she says that she is serious to create the right atmosphere for the court. When the 'mock trial' begins Sukhatme asks the first witness Ponshe some questions regarding Benare's private life:

Sukhatme : Mr Ponshe, is the accused married or unmarried?

Ponshe : To the public eye, she is unmarried.

Sukhatme : Mr Ponshe, how would describe your view of the moral conduct of the accused? Does the accused have a particularly close relationship with any man- married or unmarried? (82)

He is successful in making Ponshe admit that 'she runs after men too much.' (81) Karnik, the next witness, confesses the fact that Rokde has seen Benare in a 'compromising situation.'(85) Ponshe who is very nervous and disturbed is incited by Mrs. Kashikar to reveal that he has seen Benare in Prof Damle's room. At this Karnik signals to Ponshe to see the changed expressions of Benare. Benare now realizes that she has been baited by all. She says, 'What's all this got to do with the trial? There's no need to drag my private life into this. I can visit whom I like. Damle wasn't eating me up.'(87) Shukhatme asks Benare not to spoil the mood of the trial. He calls the game a great fun. Ponshe also says, ' this is just a game. A game, that's all! Which of us is serious about the trial? It's fun, Shukhatme! Do go on.' (88)

When Samant as the fourth witness is asked about the incident at Prof Damle's room, he gets utterly confused. Assuming it all to be a 'mock trial' Samant answers Sukhatme's questions reading from a cheap novel. Ironically, the lines he reads from the novel come close to Benare's raal situation : "Bear it in mind that you will not escape the guilt of murdering two—Two living beings". Benare who has not spoken up to the moment suddenly asks Samant to stop saying: "You have all deliberately ganged up on me! You have plotted against me!" (93) Her eyes are suddenly full of tears. Her voice is choked. She is agitated. Still with tearfull defiance she says 'What can you do to me? Just try!' (94) Tears start flowing from her eyes. She exits into the wings.

Act III opens with Kashikar's call to summon the accused to the witness box. Benare does not budge. Mrs. Kashikar pulls her forcibly and puts her into the witness-box. Benare's face reveals the terror of a trapped animal. (96) Ponkshe, as a witness, tells that Benare once tried to persuade him to marry her. Karnik tells that Benare has proposed to Balu Rokde also. Kashikar, the mock judge is so desperate to get the satisfaction of hurling some blows on the wounded accused that he makes some changes in the court proceedings and comes as a witness to reveal the fact that Benare is going to be dismissed from her job. Benare now tries to swallow the TIK 20 kept in her bag but Karnik dashes forward and stops her.

Sukhatme as the counsel for defence in the case defends the case most feebly saying, "human beings are prone to error". But, as the lawyer for prosecution he requests the court to not to show mercy to the accused and to give her the severest punishment for the terrible crime:

The woman who is an accused has made a heinous blot on the sacred brow of motherhood-which is purer than heaven itself. For that, any punishment however great, that the law may give her, will be too mild by far. The character of the accused is appalling. It is bankrupt of morality. Not only that, Her conduct has blackened all social and moral values. The accused is public enemy number one. If such socially destructive tendencies are encouraged to flourish, this country and its culture will be totally destroyed. Therefore, I say the court must take a very stern, inexorable view of the prisoner's crime, without being trapped in any sentiment. (114)

Kashikar, the judge, gives Benare 'ten seconds' to say anything about the charge that has been made against her.

'The whole court freezes in the positions they are in at the moment. And the motionless Benare stands up erect. (116) The words she speaks become the voice of millions of women who have been silenced through the ages. She says,

Yes, I have a lot to say. For so many years, I haven't said a word. Chances came and chances went. Storms raged one after another about my throat. And there was a wail like death in my heart. But each time I shut my lips tight. I thought, no one will understand. No one can understand!...I used to cry my guts out. I used to wish my heart would break! My life was a burden to me. (116)

The judgement given to Benare is the very callous:

Prisoner Miss Benare, pay the closest attention. The crimes you have committed are the most terrible. There is no forgiveness for them. Your sin must be expiated...Neither you nor anyone else should ever do anything like this again. No memento of your sin should remain for future generations. Therefore this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed.' (118)

On hearing the cruel judgement Benare cries, 'No!No!No!--I won't let you do it--- I won't let it happen---I won't let it happen!'[ ...Benare comes sobbing to the stool for the defence counsel. There she sits down, half fainting. Then in paroxysms of torment, she collapses with her head on the table, motionless. Stifled sobs come from her.] (119)

At this moment the door is opened by someone from outside. The person asks if the show has begun. All the characters start getting ready for the show. Suddenly they see Benare who is still motionless. They try to convince her that the 'mock trial' was just a game and she should not feel hurt.

The 'play- within- the- play' gives the writer the opportunity to expose the sadist behavior of the masters of patriarchal society. Thinking that in such circumstances Benare will abort her child, they had made a charge of infanticide on her. Earlier, Shukhatme and Kashikar had glorified motherhood when comes to know that Benare wants to give birth to the child, gives her the punishment of killing the unborn child .

Benare shudders to see these criminals hiding behind their skin. She says, "These are the mortals remains of some cultured men of the twentieth century. See their face how ferocious they look! Their lips are full of lovely worn-put phrases! And their bellies are full of unsatisfied desires." (117)

Sadistic behaviour is sometimes the result of jealousy and inferiority complex. All the members of the coterie except Benare are suffering from inferiority complex .Shukhatme is a flop lawyer; Mr and Mrs Kashikar are barren; Ponkhe is Inter-failed; Karnik is unsuccessful as an actor and Balu is dependent on Mr

and Mrs Kashikar. Their sadism comes to fore before Benare, who despite of being a woman is a successful human being. Benare's self-reliance reminds them of their inadequacies. The psyche of male superiority can not bear her.

Sadism does not merely involve physical violence. It may involve emotional, verbal, and psychological violence also. The violence caused in the play against Benare is not seen on physical level but emotional, psychological and verbal violence incurred to her during the 'play within the play' leaves irremovable scars on her psyche. The scene gives the impression of stripping a woman before a gang rape. We can feel the blood oozing through the wounds given to her by her co-actors. The shameless satisfaction seen on the faces of the members is shocking.

**References:**

1. Tendulkar, Vijay. *Collected Plays in Translation*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003
2. All subsequent textual references have been given parenthetically.

